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ABSTRACT

In Canada, responsibility for the career development delivery system is divided among federal, provincial/territorial, and municipal levels of government. Education comes under provincial/territorial jurisdiction. Career development varies across provinces and often from school to school. There are eight transition points throughout the school years to adulthood where guidance and career counseling are often necessary. Training and qualifications of career development practitioners vary. In Quebec, every school has vocational guidance counselors who must have a master's degree and specialist training in guidance. In other parts of Canada, guidance counselors in elementary and secondary schools must be licensed teachers. There are many current policy issues facing Canada. Leadership in Career Development is fragmented. Coherence to the delivery of career development is needed since it is difficult for clients to find their way to the right service. Very few points of service use any sort of planned method to assess counseling outcomes. Two key issues for the future are providing equity in career development to meet the needs of diverse client groups, and creating a career development service delivery structure. (Contains 3 figures and 13 references.) (JDM)

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Career Development in Canada: A Changing Landscape

By

Ralph Kellett

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9. CAREER DEVELOPMENT IN CANADA A CHANGING LANDSCAPE

Team Canada*

The Canadian concept of "career" has changed during the last 30 years. In 1960, a career in Canada referred to full-time work in a single field of endeavour. Work is now described in terms of tasks rather than jobs (Betcherman et. al., 1994). Few people will remain with the same employer for an entire "career," and lateral rather than vertical progression is more often the norm. Knowledge workers are in high demand, and the intellectual capital of a company has become the most important aspect of a company's business (Horibe, 1999).

In the past, Canadians needed to undertake career development planning at only a few major decision points. Now they must frequently consider new alternatives. As a result, career education and career assistance can no longer be considered optional. Career education must be in the mainstream of the education system and expose students to the reality of a multi-skilled, flexible work environment in which continuous learning is fundamental. Career assistance should be readily accessible for workers and work seekers. There are many challenges and obstacles to achieving these outcomes for students and workers.

Changes in the provision of career development services are driven by:

- shifts in responsibility for the delivery of social programs, from the federal to provincial/territorial, and from the provincial/territorial to the community level;
- changes in the funding of education, training and labour force programs;
- an emphasis on *individual responsibility* — providing people with the tools to help themselves;
- a move in public support from "welfare" to "employability development";
- the impact of technology as a tool to prepare for education, training and employment;
- a co-ordinated effort across jurisdictions to implement standards for the delivery of career development services; and
- efforts by governments to stimulate a business and industry focus on the connection between school and work.

Career Development in Canada — the Context

Canada does not have a national career development delivery system. There is no national federal ministry responsible for policies, programs, delivery systems and funding related to career development services. Responsibility is divided among federal, provincial/territorial and municipal levels of government.

Career Development in Education

Constitutionally, education comes under provincial/territorial jurisdiction. Each province/territory has an autonomous education system. Some co-ordination of educational policies and initiatives does occur through the Council of Ministers of Education — Canada (CMEC). However, career development has not yet been recognized by the CMEC or provincial/territorial education ministries as a priority area of concern.

Canadian elementary and secondary schools are, in the main, governed by local elected school boards that are independent agencies within the province/territory. In some cases, the school boards are affiliated with a particular religious denomination or official language. Each school board must abide by directives issued by its ministry of education. Guidelines covering guidance services are largely optional with the exception of mandatory guidance courses in *some* boards. Thus, career development varies significantly across provinces, within a province or territory, and often from school to school.

Colleges, institutes of technology, vocational centres and universities also have complete control over their career development services. There are no provincial/territorial or federal career development guidelines for post-secondary institutions. Within education, there is no mechanism to impose standards for career development education or services.

Career Development Services for Adults

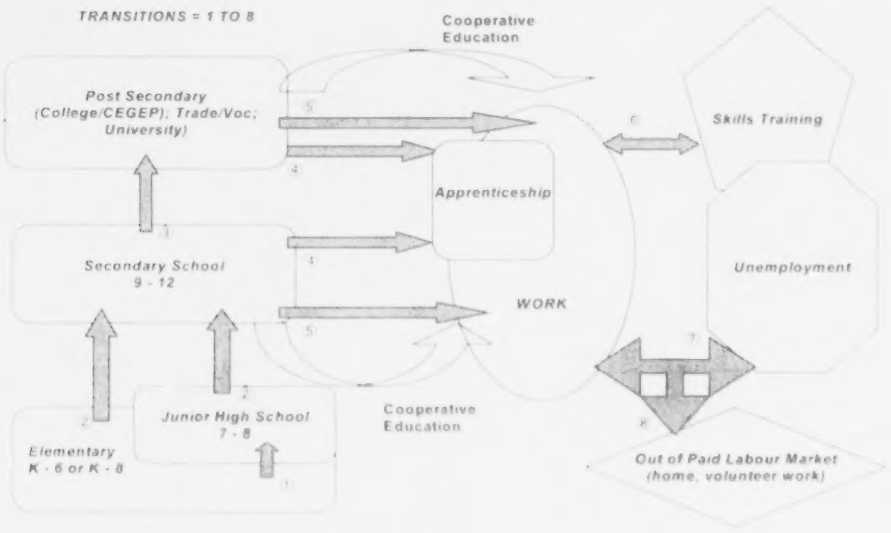
Historically, the federal government assumed primary responsibility for labour market matters, including training and career development. The situation is changing as the responsibility for most labour market matters devolves to the provinces/territories.

Since 1935, Canada has had a national employment service. In principle, all unemployed adults have access to employment services through Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) offices across the country. Employment services evolved to include career planning assistance, employment counselling, job search assistance, financial support for employment-related training and job placement.

HRDC also has a mandate to support the growth and practice of career development and the development of career and labour market information. The Department is responsible for the National Occupational Classification (NOC) system. It produces both a range of career development materials and supports non-government organizations in the development and distribution of career materials. While the delivery of direct services to clients is moving increasingly to the provinces, HRDC still continues to provide leadership in a career development support role.

The provinces/territories have the right to regulate career development services for adults. Only one province, Quebec, has licensing requirements for professionals who offer career development services. However, some federal or provincial/territorial control is exerted over non-government service providers when services are *purchased* by government departments or agencies. Some provinces have their own adult and youth career centres that offer career planning, job search assistance, counselling and placement services. Provinces also develop new career materials and practices, and some provinces (notably Alberta) are much stronger than others.

Figure 2 - The Key Career Transition Points



Career Development Transition Points

There are eight key transition points (Figure 1) where guidance and career counselling are often necessary.

Transition point 1 (elementary to junior high school)

In most provinces and territories, sixth grade students move from elementary to local junior high school. When students are faltering, they may be held back. The teaching staff, school counsellor and parents may decide to hold them back. Preparation for this transition is not elaborate. It

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may include visits by counsellors from the junior high school to discuss the change, or visits by pupils to the new school.

Transition point 2 (junior high to secondary school)
The transition from junior high or intermediate to secondary school is becoming more complex. In some areas, different schools offer different programs. Some schools cater to gifted or special needs students. Counsellors offer guidance to students and parents about the kind of programs available. Choices made this early can limit future educational and career options.

Transition point 3 (secondary to post-secondary school)
Both students and society make a large investment when someone pursues post-secondary education. The choice of education program is important and is often the strongest component of guidance given by high school counsellors.

In contrast, very little guidance is given to the student majority not pursuing post-secondary education immediately.

Transition point 4 (secondary/post-secondary school to apprenticeship)
Apprenticeship is an under-used program in Canada. Less than five percent of Canadian workers are employed in an apprenticeable trade (National Apprenticeship Committee, 1997). The apprenticeship program is a co-operative endeavour of HRDC, the provincial ministries, employers and unions. An often heard complaint is that career development materials and counselling aimed at encouraging people to enter apprenticeships and the trades are lacking.

Transition point 5 (secondary/post-secondary school to work)
The largest number of new labour force entrants move from secondary or post-secondary schools into the labour market. A number of studies show that, generally, higher levels of education lead to a higher probability of getting a good paying job (Task Force on Transitions into Employment, 1994). Those who leave high school before graduation fare the worst.

The availability of appropriate career materials, especially labour market information, in secondary and post-secondary schools is critical to successful transitions. Many students also would benefit from access to a career guidance counsellor. For the majority, this does not happen. Co-operative education programs play an important role by providing a bridge between school and work experiences. Few students access co-operative programs.

Transition point 6 (work to skills training)
Outside the formal education system, it is even more difficult to access the services of a career development practitioner. Those who can pay may obtain career services from private agencies. A few employers offer their own comprehensive career services.

Transition point 7 (unemployment to work)
Many of Canada's unemployed find themselves repeatedly without work. Some have employment integration problems that can only be addressed through in-depth assistance. A variety of career development services are needed to help the unemployed successfully get back into the work force and remain there. A large percentage is eligible for assistance from federal or provincial employment offices, or agencies contracted by these offices. Often, the criterion for services is being in receipt of some employment or assistance insurance.

Transition point 8 (out of labour market to work)
Canada's workplace is constantly changing. Being out of the labour market often means being out of date. People re-entering the labour market will usually require career development assistance. Most people who have been completely out of the labour market for some time, who are not on any form of assistance, are not eligible for assistance from the federal or provincial employment services.

Clearly, there are many service gaps in the provision of career development to Canadians.

Career Development Services in Canada — the Current State

What Constitutes Career Development Services?
Career development services in Canada comprise at least the following:

- Career education is delivered in the provincial/territorial school systems, as well as in post-secondary institutions by teachers and guidance counsellors. It provides students with knowledge of their skills, interests, talents and motivations, and information on post-secondary and labour market options.

- Career counselling helps people clarify their aims and aspirations, make informed decisions and manage career transitions through training, coaching and mentoring. It is provided by secondary and post-secondary school career/guidance counsellors and community agencies, and by a growing number of private practitioners.

- Employment counselling is usually provided by federal Human Resource Centres, provincial/territorial employment offices, agencies

contracted by government, community agencies that work with specific clientele and outplacement organizations. It helps people clarify their employment goals, understand and access training opportunities, and learn the skills needed to look for, and maintain, employment.

- It is not easy to present a clear picture of who provides career development services. There are several reasons for this.
  - Career development services are not integrated across all the transition points. Service delivery is fragmented and in a state of rapid change.
  - Career development practitioners may offer more than one kind of service to more than one type of client.
  - Only one Canada-wide survey of "career and employment counselling" has ever been undertaken (Conger et al., 1994). It only sampled public and community-based, not-for-profit providers. No survey information is available on private for-profit providers, services provided by employers, or individual career practitioners.

This one survey reveals that career development services are not evenly and equitably available across the country. Table 1 is a summary of the current provision of services. It is an oversimplification of a situation that is ever changing. A more detailed explanation of the situation follows.

Career Development in the Schools

Career education and counselling are not evenly provided by schools in Canada. A minority of ministries of education provides specific funds for educational and career guidance (in a ratio of about one counsellor for 480 students). Virtually all the funding is for salaries with little left for career development materials.

However, things are changing. There is increasing interest in career development services and co-operative education programs. Youth employment initiatives that include career development activities are increasing. The trend is toward the provision of career education through the regular school curriculum. A number of provinces/territories have introduced career development courses that carry credits toward graduation.

Table 1: Overview of Career Development Services

Transition Point	Type of Career Development Service	Category of Service Provider	Type of Clientele
1 Elementary to Junior High/Intermediate	Career education	– Elementary school counsellor – Teachers	– Elementary school students
2 Intermediate or Junior High to Secondary	Career education	– Intermediate/junior high counsellor – Teachers	– Intermediate/junior high school students
3 Secondary to Post-Secondary	Career education Career counselling	– Secondary school counsellor – Teachers	– Secondary school students (diploma)
4 Secondary or Post-Secondary to Apprenticeship	Career counselling	– Secondary school counsellor – Community-based agency	– Secondary school students (diploma and no diploma)
5 Secondary or Post-Secondary to Work	Career education - work experience Career counselling	– Secondary school counsellor – Post-secondary school counsellor – Co-operative education co-ordinator	– Secondary school students (diploma and no diploma) – Post-secondary school students (diploma and no diploma)
6 Work to Skills Training	Career counselling Employment counselling	– Private practitioner – Company career services – Adult education co-ordinators – Community-based agency – Community-based agency – For-profit employment service – HRDC/provincial/territorial employment centre	– Employed worker – Unemployed (immigrant or special needs client) – Unemployed (EI claimant) – Unemployed (social assistance recipient)
7 Unemployment to Work	Employment counselling – career information – placement services	– Community-based agency – For-profit employment service – HRDC/provincial/territorial employment centre	– Unemployed (EI claimant) – Unemployed (social assistance recipient)
8 Out of Labour Market to Work	Employment counselling – career information – placement services	– Community-based agency – Provincial/territorial employment centre	– Women returning to work – Social assistance recipient – Long-term unemployed not entitled to EI benefits

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Career development services in elementary and junior high schools
Guidance counsellors are employed in some schools at this level and focus on students in grades 6 to 9. They deal largely with school and personal adjustment problems and work with individual students and parents.

When career development is included in the curriculum at this level, it is delivered by classroom or resource teachers, not counsellors.

Career development services in secondary schools
The provision of guidance and counselling in Canada's secondary schools has a long tradition, but not every student has access to a counsellor. Research involving 758 schools in Alberta suggests that only about one in four secondary students gets individual counselling.

Students who do see a counsellor may receive assistance in program planning, course selection or provision of information about the student's current school. Career counselling activities generally centre on the preparation of a career action plan — usually post-secondary education. Little orientation to labour market information is included.

Mandatory curriculum for career development is increasingly being adopted by secondary schools and taught by regular classroom teachers. The courses usually contain some combination of career planning, personal exploration, accessing computerized career information and a brief interview with a counsellor.

Since career development is still not seen as a mainstream subject, finding classroom time is challenging. Finding teachers who are truly enthusiastic and trained to teach career development is another major challenge.

Employers, unions and the schools are all realizing there is too little learning about the world of work in schools. Co-operative education, work experience and high school apprenticeship programs are intended to provide a bridge between school and work. These programs are being more actively promoted, often with a career development component attached to them.

Career development services at the post-secondary level
Almost all colleges, institutes of technology, universities and vocational centres offer career services that include student placements into work experience and volunteer, summer, part-time and full-time employment. Some faculties require all students to take mandatory non-credit courses in career planning. Many institutions also offer credit courses in career development.

Those who seek career services at a post-secondary institution probably do access appropriate individual help, but Conger et al. (1994) suggest that just 10 percent of them ever use these services. Moreover, career information and job placement services typically are used at the end of programs rather than earlier. Many career centres and placement services run workshops on job search methods, interview techniques, preparing a résumé and starting a business.

Career Development Services Outside the Education System

Career development services provided outside the education system are generally restricted to youth of school-leaving age and adults.

Youth unemployment in Canada remains high, and both federal and provincial government departments have implemented large youth employment transition programs. Outside of the education system, career development services are available from:

- HRDC (Human Resource Centres);
- provincial/territorial employment and resource centres;
- community-based agencies;
- private for-profit groups contracted by government (outsourcing);
- private for-profit employment placement firms (headhunters);
- private for-profit career/employment (outplacement) service firms and private practitioners; and
- employer (company sponsored) career programs.

Provision by the Employment Authorities

Among governments, the federal level through HRDC has been the single largest and most important provider of career development services outside the education systems. Before the federal government devolved responsibility for labour market matters to the provinces, HRDC had 450 points of delivery and employed over 950 employment counsellors across the country.

HRDC still actively delivers a broad range of career development services in at least half of the provinces/territories but *only* to Employment Insurance (EI) claimants or people who had been on claim within the last three years. Both HRDC and the provincial/territorial employment and resource centres are making increasing use of client self-service. Almost all labour market information is available from self-serve computer terminals. Clients fill out EI claims autonomously. Computers even help clients identify their career development service needs.

Provinces/territories are now increasing their provision of career development services. Some, like Ontario and Alberta, have made the provision of employment services mandatory for a majority of social assistance recipients. Alberta targets assistance for people with multiple

employment barriers. The profile of the adult client needing career assistance is expanding to include increasing numbers of highly skilled or educated clients whose only barrier is labour market opportunity. This new client group represents new needs for services. Access and training are both implications.

Community career resource centres are found in a number of locations. They typically serve youth and adults in transition. Their funding comes, at least in part, from the provincial/territorial government. The centres usually have a library of print and video materials related to career planning and job search. Individual and group counselling is often offered. The centres are operated either by the province/territory or a community group.

Service Delivery by Community-Based Groups
Career development services provided by community groups and social agencies tend to be focussed on specific clientele, e.g., youth, women, Aboriginal people, persons with disabilities, Workers Compensation Board rehabilitation clients and so on. Several levels of government often fund the non-government groups and agencies providing service. Funding is generally provided only one year at a time so agencies are frequently focussed on survival, not service. Community agencies work closely with HRDC and provincial/territorial offices. They provide a more intensive level of service than the government offices — usually working with "hard to place" clients.

Private Sector (For-Profit) Service Providers
Relatively few youth and adults obtain career development services from private, for-profit organizations. But for-profit companies are steadily increasing their share of service provision. Three types of organizations are involved:

- companies contracted by government (usually HRDC) to provide employment counselling services;
- outplacement firms and career planning consultants that serve both employers and individuals; and
- recruitment agencies (headhunters).

In the past, HRDC contracted not-for-profit agencies to provide counselling services to specific target groups of clients. More recently, HRDC has begun contracting for-profit companies to provide employment counselling to its mainstream clientele (i.e., EI-eligible clients).

Looking at the Internet and in newspapers, we see about 200 firms that offer outplacement services. Their clients are both employed and unemployed individuals and companies. Individuals pay a fee for the assistance they get. Services include group information sessions, individual counselling interviews, help in accessing labour market information, résumé

preparation and job search. Outplacement firms also provide employment counselling and job search assistance to employees laid off by a company. The company pays for this service.

Recruitment agencies are solely in the "placement" business. They charge the employer a fee for finding employees. These firms are most active in the recruitment of office help, day labour, technology staff and management-level candidates. The agencies usually do not provide any career development services other than job placement.

The Role of Employers

Earlier, we noted that school youth do not get much "career guidance." Employers all over Canada are moving to address this shortcoming by participating in work experience and co-operative education programs and career fairs. Employers are participating in an expanding number of federal and provincial/territorial government youth employment programs.

Some employers offer a career planning service for their own employees. Counselling is typically provided to three types of employees: new hires, those who want to "get on with their careers" and those requesting help with specific problems. Many larger companies have career management systems. Designated senior staff members provide guidance and help to employees in planning and managing their careers within the company.

Training and Qualifications of Career Development Practitioners

Except in Quebec, which has its own regulations, all guidance counsellors in Canadian elementary and secondary schools must be licensed teachers. In the post-secondary system, career development staff are normally university graduates, but not licensed teachers. Those offering career counselling usually have a master's degree. If they are employed as psychologists, they must be licensed to practise in their province/territory.

In Quebec, every school has vocational guidance counsellors. They must have a master's degree and specialist training in guidance and counselling. They do not need a teaching background. Quebec school counsellors also have to be registered members of the provincial counsellors' association. Other than Quebec, career development services are not regulated.

Faculties of education are the principal source of counsellor training. Their programming is designed for guidance counsellors working in the school system, where much of the counsellor's time is spent in personal/social counselling. Most of those with some specialization in career and employment counselling offer fewer than two courses.

Programs at the community college level are growing. Within the last four years, additional programs have been introduced in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario and New Brunswick. As a result, about half of Canada's secondary school and college counsellors have taken two or more courses in career development.

The most developed "home" for career and employment counsellor training has been in the large organizations that employ counsellors. Their programs have been designed around the specific needs of the organization. HRDC's competency-based training program is an outstanding example. Unfortunately, most of this training has been restricted to counsellors within the organizations.

Current Policy Issues

Leadership in Career Development
Bring the players together to move in a common direction
Leadership in career development in Canada is fragmented. Those concerned with career development issues and needs do not have a common voice with influence. Policy makers are unable to point to one professional association or point of contact that speaks for the career development community.

Career development is both a social and economic policy issue. It is at the foundation of the school-to-work transition process. How, or if, it occurs greatly affects the efficiency and competitiveness of the Canadian economy. Yet, no one in government speaks to the career development issue when social or economic policy is debated at the national level. Attempts are occasionally made to put career development on the policy agenda but little action has resulted.

To draw attention to the need for leadership in career development, the Canadian Labour Force Development Board convened a series of leadership forums across the country in early 1995. Provincial/territorial and national participants agreed that a leadership council was needed to build bridges between career development practitioners and those involved in public policy. No council has yet been established.

On the other hand, national organizations such as the Canada Career Information Partnerships, Canada WorkInfoNet and Canada Career Consortium — all funded by HRDC — are now in place, and leadership is emerging from their efforts. Not-for-profit national organizations, such as the Canadian Career Development Foundation and the National Life/Work Centre, are working to advance career development. In many provinces and territories, career development action groups and associations are forming to advance practice. There is much momentum in Canadian career

development and room for optimism. There is also much to be accomplished.

Bring coherence to the delivery of career development
Career development services are provided in many different organizations, but it is difficult for clients to find their way to the right service. The delivery system needs to be more transparent.

There are three major hurdles to overcome.

- **Efficiency.** In an efficient system, need is matched to the service provided. Instead of providing one-on-one service, self-service or group help might be the better option. Little work has been done on mapping out the types of interventions that best suit different client needs.

- **Disconnectedness.** There is no natural transition for students leaving school to enter the work force in terms of where they go for career development assistance. This affects some 60 percent of youth.

- **Gaps in service.** In addition to youth, workers laid off by employers who do not provide career transition services (outplacement), also have difficulty accessing help, along with those who have been out of the labour market for a long time. Many do not meet the criteria for free services.

Create a career development culture
The idea of managing your career, and of obtaining advice and information on a regular basis — not just in a crisis situation — should be instilled throughout life. Our culture needs to promote lifelong learning for career development.

Many Canada-wide campaigns have been quite successful in promoting an issue-centred mind set. Examples are Participaction, promoting physical fitness, and Don't Drink and Drive. There is some evidence that the ideas for a career development culture could take hold. Examples include the innovative work done by the National Life/Work Centre on The Real Game series as well as the introduction of the idea of career-friendly communities by the Edge youth project.

Accountability for results in career development services
Conger et al. (1994) investigated evaluation and accountability for services. They found that very few points of service use any sort of planned method to assess counselling outcomes, and there was little common understanding of what the outcomes can and should be. There is progress to report. HRDC has introduced a comprehensive accountability framework for the delivery of its employment counselling services. Organizations delivering the

services under contract to HRDC must demonstrate that services are effective using the same accountability measures.

The Blueprint for Life/Work Designs, a Canadian/U.S. partnership initiative, articulates career development outcomes across the life span and can provide a shared learning framework.

Resources for career development — the funding issue
Career practitioners have seen their numbers diminish substantially over the last 10 years (Conger et al., 1994). Community colleges and universities have had their budgets cut repeatedly. Staffing of the career development programs at colleges has been reduced, as has the purchase of materials. Many practitioners report a shortage of basic career development materials. Items that were once given to schools and community groups at no charge now must be purchased. It is slowly being recognized that funding for career materials should be made available as it is for other curriculum materials.

Students are asking for greater access to computers and the Internet for career exploration. A huge variety of career products are available over the Internet and on CD-ROM. Yet many schools can only give students 20 minutes a week in computer access time for career development purposes (Alberta Education, 1995).

Standards and Training
Work is under way on the development of guidelines/standards for career development practitioners. A framework for career development competencies has been developed and is being validated by front-line workers across Canada. Implementation of the standards will be a challenge given jurisdictional issues, but the initiative is an important contribution.

Career development is gradually becoming a recognized specialization in university and college faculties. The standards will provide a focus for training.

Key Issues for the Future

Equity in Career Development - Meeting the Needs of Diverse Client Groups
Over the next 25 years, most new labour market entrants will come from the employment equity groups, which in Canada are women, Aboriginal people, visible minorities and people with disabilities (Task Force on Transitions into Employment, 1994). We can expect to see an extraordinarily large number of people from these groups making transitions into employment. They will need career development services. Our ability to meet the demands for skilled workers in the future will be greatly affected

by our ability to help these Canadians with their career planning and development.

The challenges of the next decade with respect to career development services for employment equity clients will include:

- expanding the recruitment and training of career development practitioners from the employment equity groups;
- training career practitioners on equity issues related to the provision of career development services;
- increasing availability of career development services to employment equity clients and providing the delivery agencies with adequate funding; and
- researching and developing culturally relevant career development materials.

Creating a Career Development Service Delivery Structure

Two notions will likely form the cornerstone of any future delivery system:

- Career development services should help people manage their own career development. This is *career self-management*.

- Career development is an ongoing learning process. It is *everybody's business* and is not just something undertaken at a time of crisis.

To manage their own careers, individuals must be able to access a variety of tools and services. They need different kinds of assistance at different points in their lives. At present, there are gaps and overlaps in the services. Availability is uneven.

The answer may not lie in a consolidation of services under one or another jurisdiction, which is the current trend (e.g., putting all services under provincial/territorial jurisdiction). The solution may be found in having a better connection between diverse services.

In the future, as in the present, different agencies will have to be involved in the delivery of career development services. The services will have to be effectively linked so there is continuity of support to people.

Figure 2 shows one linkage-based model for organizing the provision of career development services in the future. The model is founded on two principles:

- the identification of client needs and provision of the needed services (not a "one size fits all" service); and
- the ability to access all services in a geographical area from one starting point.

The service delivery model describes three tiers of service. Services from all three tiers could be offered at a single career service centre. The centre might be in one building run by one organization, or spread out in different locations and run by different organizations. The service centre could even provide career services to schools.

Tier one service is largely *self-service*. It may be enough for some clients. For others, it is the first stop where career development needs are identified. From self-service, clients could connect with other services in other tiers. Tier two and three services are of increasing intensity. They focus on group or individual assistance targeted to the client's need.

The linkage-based model of Figure 2, provides a reasonable vision of the future delivery system. However, we still face several challenges:

- Adequate research will be needed to identify the types and intensity of services required by different client groups in various labour market situations. This is critical.

- Inventories must be taken of career development services provided or planned in each geographical location.

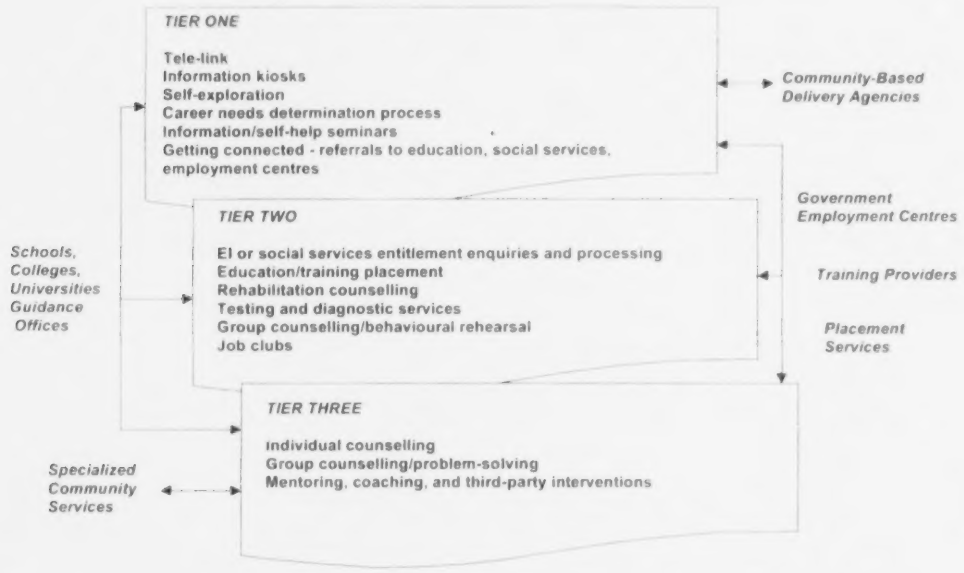
- There must be agreement among the key government and non-government players on roles and responsibilities. (Who delivers what to whom?)

- The issue of client privacy will have to be addressed while recognizing the need for information sharing among the service delivery agencies.

Making Good Use of Technology — Not Computers or People but Computers and People

Canadian society has moved from being technology interested, to technology driven and now to being technology dependent. Computer systems are central in most service areas of our economy, including the provision of career development services.

Figure 3 - Model for Linkage-Based Career Development Services



There are a number of products and systems in regular use or under experimentation that greatly enhance peoples' ability to access and understand information about work, careers and themselves. In looking at the career development services of the future, we need to:

- Know what is out there.
- See how existing or developing systems can be fully exploited in the delivery of the services.
- Clearly situate the current and potential role of computers in an area dominated by interpersonal interaction.

Computer systems must be more than record keepers or file managers for practitioners. At the same time, computers will not replace career development practitioners, nor should they.

Computers and clients are becoming partners. Computer programs now help clients articulate their personal characteristics and even help them clarify their concerns and future directions. A similar partnership could exist between computers and career development practitioners. As partners, one can expect some aspects of their roles to be shared back and forth, and the lines of separation to change from time to time. There will soon be a computer advisory system available to coach practitioners. An innovative CD-ROM comprehensive training program for career counsellors of youth and young adults is being tested now, and evaluations are very promising.

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Advancing Career Development

Canada has shown leadership in career development. Canada has contributed to advances in the theory and practice of career development. Through the CAMCRY initiatives (Creation and Mobilization of Counselling Resources for Youth), colleges, universities and individual practitioners participated in the development and dissemination of new methods and materials for career and employment counselling. Many of the new methods and innovations developed under these initiatives have become well known internationally. The Real Game Series, begun in Canada, is now internationally acclaimed. HRDC continues to fund innovative practices.

Three issues must not be lost:

- Ongoing research and development needs to be done to ensure innovation in materials and services.
- Collection and use of labour market information needs to be enhanced.
- More effective use needs to be made of computer products and systems.

Over the decades, HRDC has used three approaches to promote research, innovation and the dissemination of career development methods and materials:

- It has managed the research and publication of creative resources in-house.
- It has given grants to many organizations to develop their own projects (e.g., funding from local offices, regional offices and programs such as Innovations).
- It has directly funded major national research and development programs that fostered centres of excellence (e.g., CAMCRY).

The problem with the first approach is that governments run out of money. Governments can be catalysts, but it is the professions that must advance the field.

The second method led to the initiation of many valuable projects that continued as long as funding was provided. There were two faults in this approach: lack of insistence on professional and technical evaluation, and lack of support for the dissemination of projects. As a result, there was no multiplier effect to the millions of dollars allocated.

The third method was that of fostering centres of excellence in career development. In this case, a full scope of activities was undertaken, including planning, development, evaluation and marketing of the methods and materials.

Establishing centres of excellence may be the best avenue for maintaining an investment in career development research and innovation. Learning from these efforts and continuing to seek the most effective options will be an important foundation. HRDC is continuing to explore options through contribution agreements with national players, and by establishing and supporting networks such as the Canada Career Information Partnerships, the Canada Career Consortium and Canada WorkInfoNet. Ongoing professional and technical monitoring and evaluation will be important in learning what works best.

Final Comments

To deliver a quality service, career practitioners need to work in an environment that values their contribution. They need good tools and quality career development materials. Practitioners need professional training in the specialization of career development.

Public policy sets the stage for the provision of quality career development services. The level of government funding and support for career development contributes directly to its success. Government policies on career development reflect the value Canadians place on career development. Direct or indirect government funding determines the amount of research and development that takes place and the availability of professional training.

But governments do not act alone. In Canada, significant progress is being made through private partnerships among government departments, not-for profit organizations, private agencies and special interest groups. In this paper, we have discussed a number of issues that should be addressed to improve the provision of career development services in Canada. Other countries likely face some of the same issues.

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Endnote

* The Canadian Career Development Foundation co-ordinated the formation of the Canadian team and the completion of the country paper. Dr. Ralph Kellett completed an initial draft of the paper. It was distributed to representatives from the Canadian career development

community for feedback, which was then incorporated into the Canada paper. The same representative group was consulted regarding the formation of the country team that attended the Symposium.